

**VETERANS AND SENIORS COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Veterans and Seniors Committee was held at the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, in the Rose Y. Caracappa Auditorium, on Thursday, **April 25, 2002** at 10:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator William Lindsay, Chair
Legislator Cameron Alden
Legislator Andrew Crecca
Legislator Lynne Nowick

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Tom Donovan, Legislative Aide to Presiding Officer Tonna
Art Lozeau, Veterans Service Agency
Holly Rhodes-Teague, Office for the Aging
Bob Smith, Veterans Emergency Transportation, Inc.
Sean Clancy, Budget Review Office
Nicole DeAngelo, County Executive's Office
Terry Pearsall, Legislative Aide to Legislator Lindsay
Ed Hogan, Legislative Aide to Legislator Nowick
Frank Belsito, American Legion Post
Margaret DeSunti, Ret. Capt. USANC
Marilyn Wilson
Hal Wilson

NOT PRESENT:

Legislator Martin Haley

Minutes Taken By:

Kimberly Castiglione, Legislative Secretary

(The meeting was called to order at 10:35 a.m.)

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

I will call the Veterans and Seniors Committee to order and Legislator Alden is going to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(Salutation)

Okay. We have a couple of speakers this morning. The first one is Robert Smith. He is the President and CEO of the Veterans Emergency Transportation Incorporated. Bob, do you want to come up?

MR. SMITH:

Good morning. My name is Bob Smith and I am the President and CEO of Veterans Emergency Transportation. I would like to thank you Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, Legislator Alden, Crecca, and Nowick, for giving me this opportunity to talk a few minutes about this not-for-profit.

Very simply, we are made up of a number of veterans, all veterans, my board of directors, and we formed this because it was necessary. And what I mean by this is, as the Director of the Veterans Service Agency for five years, from '95 to 2000, one of the major problems that kept coming into the agency was transportation for medical care.

For example, if you live in Holbrook and you want to go to Good Sam Hospital or Winthrop or any hospital outside of your zone or district, you had no way of getting there. If you lived in Smithtown and you wanted to go to Stony Brook, the van, the town van, would not take you. If you wanted to go to a doctor's appointment in the afternoon at Northport VA Medical Center, the town van would not take you if you didn't come from that area, nor would the DAV vans, Disabled American Veteran vans that transport veterans to the hospital, drive in the afternoon doctor's appointments. They all retire at about noon. If you live east of Riverhead, you had no way of getting to Northport VAMC.

What we simply did was – I did a cost analysis of would it be cheaper for me to buy a van, a dispatcher – I did a cost analysis on gasoline and a driver, and I thought it would just be cheaper for me to subcontract out to have all veterans and/or their spouses picked up and taken to medical facilities for treatment, doctor's appointments. So we did that.

The next question was where do I get the funding from, so I throw a dinner/dance every November. This year it is going to be held on Veterans Day. We usually raise about \$20,000 and that pays for -- it looks like it is taking us about a year to two years, it is carrying us over to transport veterans to medical facilities.

Why I am here today is to, and I am here not in the capacity as the Director of Suffolk County Human Services and I am here on my own time, I am here to inform you that this service is available so that you can let all of your constituents know in your areas that this is available. If someone called one of your offices and said they have a problem getting to a doctor's appointment, you would have a hard time answering them because the vans in your town would not cross boundaries. We have no boundaries and we take anybody and we don't ask them for any fees.

So, I am just here to share this information with you. The problem looks strong. We are moving people on a daily basis, and I just wanted to let you know that you can call upon us at any time. We use the Veterans Service Agency as our phone number, 853-VETS, because most of the calls come into the Suffolk County office, so if you call 853-VETS or tell your constituents to call 853-VETS, they will contact our dispatcher and we will have the car out.

Most town vans ask for two weeks notice, we ask for 24 hours notice. Most town vans stop running early afternoon, we run all night, 24/7.

I have another meeting I have to go to, but I will share a few minutes with any questions that you may have.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Bob, the first thing is I would like to commend you for the work that you do with our veterans. I think it is very commendable. Do you have any kind brochure on this service that we could put into our district offices?

MR. SMITH:

Actually, we are working on something. We will have it available to you. Thank you for asking for that. And let me just also add that none of the directors nor myself draw salaries. All of the money goes for the transportation.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Very good.

MR. SMITH:

I will get something to all of your offices.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Does anybody else on the committee have any comments? Thank you very much.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you so much for your time.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Our next speaker is Frank Belsito, who is the Post Commander of the Pearl Harbor American Legion Post 1941 Port Jefferson. Good morning, Frank.

MR. BELSITO:

Good morning, and good morning to all the Legislators. For those who do not know me, I have been very involved with the American Legion for quite a few years, but also been coming to the Legislature at different times asking for help. I have prepared remarks that I would like to start off with. It just a three minute backup.

First of all, I would like to thank Legislator William Lindsay, who is the Chair of the Vets Committee, for this opportunity to address you all today. My name is Frank Belsito, Commander of the American Legion Pearl Harbor Memorial Post in Port Jeff. I am a Korean War Veteran, and I am the Chairman of the upcoming US Flag Day event. I would like to introduce Margaret DeSanti, and Army Nurse who served in Vietnam and in Desert Storm, and who is also a member of the American Legion and member of our Flag Day Walk Committee. Another member that was scheduled to be here this morning, who is a World War II Vet, had to unexpectedly go to upstate

New York yesterday afternoon.

The information I would like to share with you, the Armed Forces Plaza in front of the Dennison Building was a dream of Suffolk County Legislator Rose Caracappa, who at that time was the Chair of the Veterans Committee. She was still the Chair for the Korean War Veterans Monument, the two monuments that are out there. I was proud to say that I was the Chair of that committee. I would also like to state that the project was completed under the amount budgeted for the two Korean War monuments. I think that was the first time we even turned money back.

In 1995, when Suffolk County Legislator Michael D'Andre was the Chair of the Veterans Committee, I was the Chair for Calverton National Cemetery US Gravesite Flag Committee. The purpose of that committee was to raise \$30,000 to purchase US gravesite flags to place on the graves of our deceased veterans that are buried in Calverton, to honor and remember them for Memorial Day. It took us eight years to fight with the VA just so we can decorate the graves out there. Plus, we had to go out and raise the money.

Our committee made a presentation to the Suffolk County Veterans Committee and asked for some funds for the flags. Chairman D'Andre asked if \$10,000 would help. I, of course, was yes, and the committee voted unanimously for the \$10,000, which we did receive, and then we went and raised the balance so we could purchase all of the flags.

Since 1995, our committee has grown as Calverton National Cemetery has grown. At that time they had 90,000 graves. Today we have 165,000 graves at Calverton. Calverton would be the largest national cemetery in the country. Every year there will be another 10,000 graves to place a flag on.

I would like to inform you that we now have 2,500 boy scouts, 2,000 girl scouts, and 500 adult leaders, that is a total of 5,000 volunteers, who come to Calverton. They will be out next month to place a flag on the graves for Memorial Day. These 5,000 people decorating the 165,000 graves has it done in 45 minutes. It is unbelievable the way these kids are out there doing it. The scouts come back the following week to pick up the flags and then they are stored for use the following year.

You each received information about why we are here today. Our committee has changed our plans for a fundraising event to a day of remembrance. We are planning to have a walk-a-thon as a fundraiser, which would have been the first in the nation for Flag Day. But then we decided that, as we all heard the news media about December 7, 1941, the attack on Pearl Harbor, and September 11th, the 2001 attack, the young people today live through a time in history that like Pearl Harbor, should never be forgotten. This is the reason why we have changed for the Us Flag Day Walk. Our budget is \$28,328. We did a presentation at the Brookhaven Town Board meeting last week, and the Board unanimously passed a resolution for funds totaling \$5,000 to help us.

If the County could help us like they did in the past with \$10,000, we will raise the balance. When you look at our past accomplishments, you will see that we care about those who served in US Military and we feel that we have to always remember the men and women who paid with their lives for our freedoms. We can work together to remember many of those men and women who were residents of Suffolk County.

With that, I thank you for your time and I hope that you will help us in this endeavor that we are doing. Our main goal is to get as many school children out there to do this Day of Remembrance Walk, which, like I said, I think you all received the information that we sent to you and we shouldn't forget. I hate to say this, already that is started to slip away with September 11th already. And if we don't keep it up there in the front, especially with the young people today, then they are just going to go by the wayside.

I have to say that all of the scouts that come out to Calverton, I always comment them for starting the Memorial Day weekend the right way by coming out there and paying tribute to these men and women. But I also tell them that these men and women served so that they can enjoy the weekend and enjoy their freedoms. But we still should never forget. So, if we have any questions.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Frank, so you are having this walk-a-thon on June 14th.

MR. BELSITO:

June 15th.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Fifteenth. Fourteenth is Flag Day, 15th is the following Saturday. And the purpose is to raise money or as a remembrance or both?

MR. BELSITO:

No. The purpose is really – originally we were going to do a walk-a-thon to raise some funds. Now we decided that we would like to do a Day of Remembrance and just cover the cost of the –

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay, so it isn't to raise money.

MR. BELSITO:

Not at all.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

And is it still going to be at Stony Brook?

MR. BELSITO:

Yes, it will be at the University. Everything is in place. Now it is just a question if you people can help us with some funds, and like I say, we will go out and do the rest.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Expenses are \$28,000?

MR. BELSITO:

Yes. I mean, between the flags, the t-shirts – we want to give them a t-shirt, it will just say US Flag Day with the year 2002, and on the sleeve it will say Remember December 7th and September 11th. I think that today it is important that we get some people out carrying a flag and wearing the t-shirt. It will stick with them. Just like we say to the scouts that come out to Calverton, they will never forget Memorial Day for the rest of their lives, after coming out there and placing a flag on those graves. And I think it is the same thing with this, that if we give them something and we do something, they'll remember it. And a lot of these people, like I said, are residents of Suffolk County, so that is why we are here asking for your help.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

I don't think anybody on the committee disagrees with the intent of the day. Originally you were going to use Stony Brook because the campus is very adaptable to a walk.

MR. BELSITO:

It is enclosed and it is not on any of the roads.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Right. But now that that is out of the way, it is just the ceremonies, right? No? It is still a walk?

MR. BELSITO:

Oh, yeah, we are going to do the walk.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Oh, you are going to do the walk anyway?

MR. BELSITO:

Yes. We want these people to walk that 3.1 mile. We are calling it the Remembrance Day Walk.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. I misunderstood that.

MR. BELSITO:

And we also are – I heard from the Fire Commissioner in the City yesterday. We are trying to get the three men who – the three firemen who raised the flag there at Ground Zero. We think it is very apropos if we had them raise the flag and we had three Pearl Harbor survivors raise a flag. It would be very meaningful to the two dates.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

I am sure it is. And there is still, there is a fee that the University is

charging?

MR. BELSITO:

Yes. We can't get around it. We just can't get around it.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Just so the committee knows, I met with Frank and I was trying to get him to move it to Armed Forces Plaza because I knew there wouldn't be any fees there. We would be able to save some money. Go ahead, Legislator Nowick.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

Just so I know because I live in that area. Where are walking from, Stony Brook, and where are the 3.2 miles going?

MR. BELSITO:

That is all on the campus.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

That is all on the ground?

MR. BELSITO:

All on the campus, yes. The one building I think is the students activity building. It will start there, there is a circle there. We start there and they are going to block off to where we can walk the 3.1 miles.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

And then when you get to the end it culminates in a ceremony.

MR. BELSITO:

Yeah. We are going to have the opening ceremony at 10:15 and then the kick-off will be at 11:00.

CHAIRMAN LINDAY:

Anyone else?

MR. BELSITO:

Of course we would like to see you all there? If you like to walk, we would be glad to see you walk. We will have a t-shirt waiting for you, and a flag.

CHAIRMAN LINDAY:

We are having a private discussion while we are trying to discuss among ourselves, and I guess we are going to have to continue among the Legislators, is to find out how to – to see if we can identify some funds to help you out. Did the State waive any part of the fees at the college? Nothing. How much is it?

MR. BELSITO:

What was it, 3,000? I believe we sent everything to each one of you.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

You did, Frank, you sent us all a budget. We just didn't have the budget in front of us right now.

MR. BELSITO:

The University is \$3,330. The only thing I am trying to do is I am trying to touch base with the Veterans Service Agency on the campus and see if they can get involved and maybe we can chop off a little bit there, maybe. There is no promise to it. The only thing that got waived was the police. They weren't going to charge us.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

I apologize about the private conversations. We are just trying to figure out how to help you out, Frank.

MR. BELSITO:

Would it help if we came and made a presentation at the full Legislature?

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Yeah. Legislator Alden.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

One problem that we were just talking about, and some of us have contingency money, Legislator's grants, that we could probably get together a few thousand dollars that way by putting the word out to all Legislators and see what we could do with that. But even if we pass a resolution today, if we could locate (x) number of dollars in the overall budget, even if we passed a resolution today the money wouldn't get to you for basically months and months. Even going aside from amending the budget, if there was just something like a project or something like that, a cash project that we could get the money from and identify the money, it would still have to go the full legislative body, be passed by them. Then it gets signed by County Executive Gaffney, and then as far as to get a check cut, it is going to take a couple of months, and I am talking about that is the fastest that it could probably happen.

MR. BELSITO:

Well, when you are saying a couple of months, we are talking what, July?

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

June, July – probably July, August, something like that.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

The budget amendments – we can only amend our budget four times a year. The next time we can file is May, we can file in May, which means it won't be eligible for a vote until June.

MR. BELSITO:

Well, I know that I could work –

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

And even once – if it does get approved, just to let you know, too, then a contract has to be done between your organization and the County and then there is still time that elapses in the time that monies are actually distributed. Government works very slowly sometimes on some of these things, and I apologize for that, but we are bound by the Charter Law as to the times when we can amend our budget.

MR. BELSITO:

You know, probably we ran into the same situation when Mike D'Andre was the Chairperson. And I think what happened at that time, and I know it did, the flag company worked with us as far as with the paying for the flags and all. I am more than certain that the t-shirt people would work with us, too. It is not that they are going to want money on demand. Thank God we have a good reputation. But if that would be the case, I am more than certain that we could work it out.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Go ahead.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

And we would direct this to Budget Review. Is there anyplace that we have somewhere between five and ten thousand dollars?

MR. CLANCY:

Off the top of my head I don't really know that for sure right now. I mean, I can look into it –

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Can we take \$10,000 off of Holly's salary or something? That is putting you on the spot to ask you.

MR. CLANCY:

If you can give me a finite, you know, amount of money to look for –

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

They have asked for \$10,000, so.

MR. CLANCY:

Just ten. I can check.

MR. BELSITO:

I like the way he said that, just ten.

MR. CLANCY:

I can check if you can give me some time to look into it.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

If you could get back to the Chairman.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

And Mr. Chairman, I would also ask Art, the Director of Veteran Affairs, if you have any creative ideas on how we might be able to address this, too, Art, to reach out to the Chairman or the committee members, too.

MR. BELSITO:

Art is ready to write a check for us.

MR. LOZEAU:

I don't have any money for that. I am Art Lozeau, Director of the Veterans Service Agency. Truthfully I don't have any money to give him, and so any other ways of raising the money I don't know.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Just one other thing, Frank. Have you approached our State Senators about doing something with the fees, and Assemblymen?

MR. BELSITO:

No.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Would you mind if we try that?

MR. BELSITO:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

And the fee that the college is charging is \$3,500?

MR. BELSITO:

Thirty-three.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Thirty-three hundred dollars. Let us individually work on that to see if we can get some relief for you there. And we'll put our heads together and see if we can get you some money to have this event.

The only thing that I ask is that in future events or something like that, see if you can plan them around Armed Forces Plaza. We spent a lot of money over there making what we think is a very nice memorial to our veterans in all our foreign wars, and we would just like to see it used.

MR. BELSITO:

I agree with you. Actually, when you made that suggestion it is not that I didn't look into it. I did go over there and I did ride around there, and it could be worked out. But I think that for this one, if we use the State University –

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

No, I understand that you are committed here and that this one can't be

changed. I understand that and we will work with that. I am just asking in the future.

MR. BELSITO:

I am wondering if I can just let our Captain over here say a word or two.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Absolutely.

MS. DeSUNTI:

If you don't mind, Legislator Lindsay, Legislator Alden, Nowick, Crecca. I would just like to say – he stated my background in the service, my service to my country. There is a lot of us ladies out there, ICW's they call us, In Country Women, that served in Vietnam that have not come out of the woodwork yet and still have to have closure. I do my closure in this fashion. Frank called me, and anything that has to do with my country and my flag I will support.

I would just like to say that just in the memory of all the forever youngs that us ladies serviced in the service, any help that you can give this flag walk would be appreciated and I thank you.

MR. BELSITO:

Just so I know, would you think it be right to come and make a presentation to the full Legislature? I think you have a meeting coming up in a week or so.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Yeah. It is a night meeting next Tuesday. We have a public portion that you are more than welcome to come and make a presentation.

MR. BELSITO:

Well, I always keep a list of the active Legislators that we have today, and I know the people that I can personally touch base with is Guldi and Towle and Caracappa and Fisher, Haley, Foley. Bill Lindsay, I believe with our conversation you are with us. I have to ask a question, Mr. Alden. Your parents were involved with the American Legion, weren't they?

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

You remember my mom, then. She was president of the American Legion Auxiliary. My dad was Goldstar Parent Chairman and also served in the State. He was a Commanders Aide.

MR. BELSITO:

I made the connection and I said to myself I just have to ask if I am right or wrong. They were both dedicated to the American Legion, both of them were. And Angie Carpenter. I am just going to mention you two people that are sitting on the committee because we never met before really, Crecca and Nowick. But Bishop and Postal and Binder, these people I have dealt with in the past and I am more than certain that if I came and made a presentation and also touched based with them that we can get support. I guess actually

the Legislature works different than from Gaffney's Office, am I right? Okay.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

If I can make a suggestion, too. Possibly a letter or a memo or something like that to each Legislator's office to ask them if they have any funds available from – there is legislative grants that can be given out. Most people already put them in at the first of the year. So, you know, there is a chance that everybody's – all their money is committed, but there is a chance still that some people might have some money that is not committed, and that might be another way to raise a few dollars, too. If we can't locate 10,000 in the budget, we might be able to get – even if it is \$500 from each Legislator, that would be in like the \$9,000 range. That might work, too. But a letter specifically asking them and then a presentation at the next – our Tuesday night's meeting, that would probably go a long way to answering anybody's question as to what it was going to be for and things like that.

MR. BELSITO:

At Tuesday's night meeting, would you make any mention of our presentation here today or I will just follow through with what I spoke to you people.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

What you should do, Frank, is you should come and fill out a yellow card which means you will be a speaker at the public portion. You'll have three minutes and we'll mention that you appeared before the Veterans Committee and I have had meetings with you and that, you know, we would like to figure out some way to help out in this event. And again, I don't think there is anybody here or on the Legislature that doesn't agree with the purpose of the walk. I think especially what is going on in our nation today, everybody is very, very aware that we are under attack and it is more important than ever that we remember our veterans and we remember the people that gave their lives for this country, and that Americans we rally around our nation. It is just a simple matter of finding the money to promote this event. It is the nuts and bolts, like dollars. You know, finding where we get the dollars from.

MR. BELSITO:

It is just like what Bob Smith before making mention of his volunteering, and that is what we are. We are all volunteers. We just feel that to keep America going and in the right direction and we have to just work with the youth and bring it to their attention.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

And I will be at the walk-a-thon.

MR. BELSITO:

You are going to be at Calverton, too, you told me.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Yes.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

One other quick comment, too, is I understand that you might have a commitment this year with Stony Brook University, but we would love to have you take advantage of the Armed Forces Plaza, even if it mean us having to coordinate with Suffolk County Police in blocking off some roads and things like that. I think we could get you a 3.1 mile route that would be satisfactory. Then at least we are right there in the heart of Suffolk County's dedication and honoring of veterans.

MR. BELSITO:

Well, what about if I make this commitment to you, that we will do it again next year and we will do it at Armed Forces Plaza.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

And I would, I think, if I was you at the general meeting also mention to all the Legislators that maybe each one of us could put a call in to our State officials. I think the more the better. Maybe a little more pressure. That would be 3,500 right there if we could get that waived.

MR. BELSITO:

Well, I will tell you what I will do. This afternoon I will even try and touch base with Assemblyman Englebright because I know he is very involved with the University. Well, so is Ken LaValle. I guess both of them.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

And that is also Senator Lack's district right there, too.

MR. BELSITO:

Is it?

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Yeah. I know. Everyone is shocked when they hear that.

MR. BELSITO:

Okay. Anyway, I really thank you all for your attention because I know sometimes what happens is making presentations sometimes you get distracted with speakers but I know you are listening. But today I really compliment you all and I thank you all for really your attention. Thank you. Thank you for putting it all together for us.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Does anybody else want to address the committee? Come on forward.

MS. WILSON:

Good morning. My name is Marilyn Wilson and this is Tsu Wilson and this is my husband, Hal Wilson. Hal Wilson is a veteran of Vietnam. He served in the Marine Corp in the First Battalion Knights. Tsunami is a civilian but she is a volunteer. Tsunami served at the World Trade Center and responded there with Hal as a volunteer and a member of an all volunteer group that was

formed after the September 11th attacks, and it is called Canine Soldiers Search and Rescue. They were the first and only volunteer unit, dog canine unit, to respond to the World Trade Center. There were no search and rescue groups existing on Long Island or even in New York City, at the time Nassau, Suffolk and New York City. And in light of happened on September 11th, we have formed an all volunteer group. However, that is peripheral to why we are here today.

In addition to being a dog trainer, I am also a pet columnist. For many years I have been writing about our war dogs, our military dogs. I believe that our military dogs are America's truly forgotten heroes. I will give you a brief background on our war dogs.

Basically, we had a few in World War I, but basically World War II we learned a lot from the Germans and we realized how valuable these animals could be in many, many capacities. Their noses are phenomenal, and we do use their noses a lot in many different ways. They can search out an enemy. They can secure a building. They can alert to the presence of a human. They can act as messengers. They can patrol. They can attack. They can kill. They are fearless. They no know nothing about death. They will just obey orders and do what they are trained to do.

World War II, our canine units consisted of volunteer dogs that were donated by American people. Those dogs came home. Many of them were awarded ribbons and they were in parades and it was wonderful. Many did die in their duties. They were responsible for saving scores and scores of soldiers. Things changed then in Vietnam, where more than 5,000 dogs served. The dog was really, really a phenomenal asset in the jungle warfare. Most of your patrols went out at night and the dog didn't need to see that well, the dog could smell. And the scout dogs particularly, the scout dog was generally a German Shepherd dog, very much like Tsu over here. In fact, Tsu's training is very, very similar to the scout dog. The only missing element in Tsu is she has never been trained to attack. She has been trained to lick when she finds somebody. She will give them kisses and come back to me and bring me to the lost person. The Vietnam scout dog was trained to freeze when he smelled something. He would freeze on a trail, in elephant grass that was 20 feet high the dog would freeze, and that meant that everybody would stop. These dogs saved tens and thousands of people.

However, they met with a very ignominious fate. The dogs were considered equipment, very much like a jeep. And the dogs did not come home. Out of all of those 5,000 dogs that saved tens or thousands of soldiers, a handful were smuggled back home. The rest were put to sleep, euthanized, killed by our government. Most of them were injected and died that way. Other dogs were given to the South Vietnamese, to their military. There was a real problem with doing that, however. Much as we eat cows and people in India don't, the Vietnamese, their culture, likes eating dogs. They don't like dogs, their culture. And especially a black dog. A black dog is considered to have some kind of mojo working and they are evil, they are possessed. Many times the Vietnamese would torture the dog before they would eat them. So

these dogs, our hero dogs, our military soldiers, our canine soldiers, were either killed by our hands or they were given to the South Vietnamese who tortured and ate them.

Desert Storm, our next war, the dogs were there, too. Those dogs didn't come home, either. Those dogs – and this is kind of a big secret. I mean, those dogs just didn't come home. They were used eventually for experiments with anthrax and with germ warfare, right there in country in Kuwait, and they were killed.

Right now our dogs are working right now, our military dogs. They are in Afghanistan. Their noses are phenomenal and think of what an asset that is for the caves in that country, for the landmines. That country is riddled with landmines, and these dogs, they have special dogs that can detect the landmines much better than a machine can. They are in the Philippines right now. We have real problems over there. In fact, they are all over the world at every single military base that we have.

The dogs can detect something that is buried seven feet under the ground. The dogs can detect something that is 200 feet underwater. The dogs can detect the scent of a human maybe a mile away. They are pretty phenomenal. They are in our airports. We have special machines that can detect bombs, however, a dog is more efficient, they are faster and they are better. The Coast Guard uses our dogs on a daily basis. One of our members of Canine Soldiers Search and Rescue raises Labradors and he donates a few dogs from each of his litters to the Coast Guard and they use these dogs for bomb detection and drug detection.

There are no monuments to our war dogs here in New York State. There is one in Hartsdale, New York, that was erected after World War I, but it was sort of like that pet little dog. It wasn't the same kind of dog as what we are talking about now. These are high tech, highly trained dogs. In Lackland Airforce Base they are raising their own breed of war dog. This is a very, very specialized dog. It is a Shepherd and it can do everything. When you see these dogs attack people, this is not a vicious dog. This is a dog that is trained to attack. The next minute when the dog is told to not attack, it will be licking your face. They are highly, highly trained dogs. Go look at our Suffolk County Police Canine dogs. These dogs are cross trained to do everything, to do drug detection, bomb detection, attack work and finding the lost. They do it all, and this is what our military dogs do, except that now we have more of a specialization because of our threat to our country with bombs. The dogs that are in our airports right now are not really trained to attack, they are trained to find the bombs, and that is what we need them there for. We have a shortage of them. But they are all our war dogs and they have been forgotten.

By the way, in 2000, before Bill Clinton left office, he did enact a bill which was signed into law that says that our dogs come home now. They come home after wars. So at least we have that. But Suffolk County would be at the forefront of our nation by recognizing our war dogs. They are America's

forgotten heroes, and I want to thank Legislator Fred Towle for introducing a resolution to erect a war dog memorial here in Hauppauge.

I have some pictures and some photos of some possibilities of what the memorial could look like. The concept is to just have a dog. There have been other memorials throughout the country and they will have a soldier with it. Well, what kind of soldier? Our Vietnam soldier looked very, very different from our Desert Storm soldier. We wanted a universal dog, a dog for all wars, a dog for our high tech wars today. And some people are saying that the dog looks like a wolf. Well, I guess German Shepherds do look kind of wolfie. They are not Poodles, they are not a Shihtzu. They are serious war dogs.

Hal came up with the concept of the dog walking up on a piece of granite that looks sort of like a rock, maybe a craggy surface, and the dog is stepping off into the unknown, because that is what the dogs will do. They are fearless. They will just go off and do their job, whatever it may be. And I have seen it with our dog here, Tsu. Every Sunday we train our dogs and I will ask her to go into an area, I will ask her to jump into a river or a stream or a lake to retrieve something for me, and she just does it. That is what these dogs are about. So we wanted just the dog. The German Shepherd is probably the most typical war dog. They do use other breeds, mainly Labradors. The Labradors are used for a lot of water work. You know, they just love the water. But basically it is your German Shepherd dog that is your typical war dog.

Major Paul Morgan, who is probably – he lives in Smithtown. He is a Vietnam Veteran, Green Beret Special Forces. He got us started with the war dog memorial. He heard about my writings that I had done as a pet columnist about America's forgotten heroes and the fate of our Vietnam and Gulf War dogs. He got a hold of me and said Marilyn, we have to do something about this. He can't be here today because he winters in Florida, he will be back in May. He winters in Florida. He was wounded about four times in Vietnam, I believe.

I have here a letter written by Paul. It is a letter of why he wants the war dog memorial. He had a dog named Tsu also in Vietnam. He got her from a missionary priest in Vietnam. And the missionary got the dog, I don't know, somehow. The dog's name was some kind of a Vietnamese sounding words that sounded some like Susie, so he called her Susie. Susie was a little teeny German Shepherd. Tsu weights about 65 pounds. Susie weighed about 45 because she grew up on fish and rice. Well, Paul wanted that dog because he knew – he wasn't officially canine, but he was a major and he was Green Beret and he was going to do what he wanted, and wanted a dog because he knew that would save his life eventually. So he wanted that little Susie so he offered the missionary a set of sterling silver rosary beads and a pearl handled 45 for Susie and the missionary priest said okay, and he gave him Susie.

On one of his missions – he was kind of spooky in Vietnam. He used to do

things to go into like Cambodia and in one mission a helicopter had gone down and he went in with – I think he would go in with about 10 people, a little team, and they go in there are they try to – they didn't know if the guys were dead from the crash or not. But he went in there and he went in there with Susie. So they were coming into the area where the helicopter was down. It didn't look like anybody was alive, but they couldn't be positive and they were going to go in now and Susie alerted. There are different ways that dogs alert, but he knew. You read your dog. Tsu has a way of telling me when she finds somebody. You read them. So Susie told him not to go in. Found out that a Vietnamese unit was in there, and if they had gone in they would have been wiped out. Well, that was just one time that Susie did this. So Susie saved those ten that time and several other times, Susie and another dog that Paul had named Bear, saved his life and his unit. So I have a letter here from Paul because he can't be with us today.

And as I said, Paul lives in Smithtown. Paul and his dog, Cody Bear, were with Hal and Tsu at the World Trade Center. Cody Bear is a Golden Retriever. He can't have German Shepherds anymore because they just bring back too, too many memories. He just can't handle the German Shepherds anymore. He had several in Vietnam, and when he came back home he ran a security service and he also used the German Shepherd dog.

Some of the details of the proposed monument, of course the chunk of granite, I got a price from Dawn Wesche, who owns Wesche Funeral Home in Center Moriches. Dawn was responsible for the TWA Flight 800 Memorial that is in Center Moriches near Camp Paquatuck. Not the one at Smith Point Beach, not that great big huge one. She gave us a price of this chunk of granite. It came in at around \$8,000 --\$7,874. It is about three foot high and four foot long and it is this craggy looking thing. And that includes the inscription that would be on the front of memorializing these war dogs, these war dogs that covered all of our wars. For all of our soldiers, for every single branch of the Armed Forces. Every single branch does have a canine unit, including the Navy and the Coast Guard.

The sculptor that we have been in contact with, who has done some of these samples, they are samples, comes in at around \$21,000. I figure around 25 in case there are problems with it, but that includes the foundry, the casting -- bronze is very expensive – his being here for about a week and setting it up, erecting it on this block of granite, forming the template. He would be working hand in hand with Dawn who does the granite.

I don't know exactly where it would be. Here in Hauppauge I was thinking of the Armed Forces Plaza. I don't know. There is another section of the building that I heard might be appropriate also on the other side of the building there is another area there, I am not sure.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

I don't know, but I know there is an advisory panel about Armed Forces Plaza, the planning of it. Art, do you know anything about this?

MR. WILSON:

We, of course, would like to be included at the Plaza with the other memorials of course, but wherever is felt appropriate would be fine with us.

MR. LOZEAU:

There is an Armed Forces Plaza Master Planning Committee that meets on call to discuss these and other type of issues for placement of monuments at Armed Forces Plaza. And members are a member from the Legislature, DPW, Planning Committee, Veterans Service Agency, County Executive and a veteran from the community. So, this would be an issue they would address.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

But this issue hasn't come up before the committee yet.

MR. LOZEAU:

No, it has not come up.

MS. WILSON:

There was a meeting the other day.

MR. LOZEAU:

I said there is no meeting of the Armed Forces Plaza Committee. I don't know what other committees have met.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

The purpose of the planning committee is that the Plaza be representative of all our veterans groups and that is the purpose of the committee. What committee were you referring to?

MR. GARAFOLA:

The Legislature passed a resolution requiring any new monuments, symbols, to go in front of a special ad-hoc committee, memorial symbols, chaired by Legislator Caracappa. They actually met last Monday for the first time ever and the only thing on the agenda was this resolution and it passed through.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Legislator Crecca.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Two things. First of all, I am familiar with the Armed Forces Plaza Committee, and this is something that would have to pass muster with that committee I'm sure. That doesn't stop us, I don't think, from acting on the resolution per say, number one.

The other thing I wanted to just alert the committee to, and I will alert Art, too, is I have had some discussions, too, ability the possibility, and I say possibility, of putting together a task force to address whether or not we should have the Vietnam War represented at Armed Forces Plaza but with a monument. That is something I am working on. I will certainly share what I have done to date with the committee and it is something I am going to be looking into. I just bring that up also just so – in case anybody hears that,

that is something that I have been working on for the past few months.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Art, we are supposed to have a meeting of the Planning –

MR. LOZEAU:

We meet on May 2nd at 11 a.m.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Could you put this on the agenda?

MR. LOZEAU:

Right.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

And if you folks could either appear before that special committee with the renderings, you know, we could go through the planning on where to put this and how to put it and, you know.

MR. WILSON:

I would like to mention, just to clarify, that this is for the dogs of all conflicts, not just Vietnam.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Right. The meeting is –

MR. LOZEAU:

May 2nd. It is at the H. Lee Dennison Building, the third floor, the Human Services Division Conference Room at 11 a.m.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

You guys got that? I thought that was the committee meeting that you were referring to at first, you know. Yes, Legislator Nowick.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

I just wanted you to know as an aside and as a point of information in the district that I live in, Smithtown/St. James, we have the Guide Dog Foundation. From what I understand that the dogs that – when I say don't make it in the Guide Dog Foundation, they are probably too sweet, they are sent to the Department of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and they have had – they go all over the world, I understand, and they have had a 100% success rate with these dogs, which is a nice thing. I have watched these dogs train. They are incredible, they are brilliant, and I think that we understand where you are coming from on this.

MS. WILSON:

Because of this whole World Trade Center thing, one of the nice things that came out of it was the recognition of the dogs. There were 315 dogs that served at the World Trade Center in various capacities. And we met a lot of these people because we went to a lot of ceremonies honoring the dogs and

it was really nice. The dogs deserved it. I don't know if we deserved it that much, but the dogs certainly did.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

And they never complain, right? They never say this is not my job, I am not hired for this, they just do it their job.

MS. WILSON:

They just do it, and then they give you a lick on the face. But we went to a ceremony recently at the British Consulate in New York City and Tsunami, in fact, received the highest award given to animals from the British Isles. It is called the Dicken Award and it is very much like the Victoria Cross for animals.

But along with her getting that, we are too seeing eye dogs, and these stories are pretty incredible. There were two blind people who were in the World Trade Center towers when the planes hit, and these dogs, these seeing eye dogs, led them down through the stairwell. These dogs had never even been in the stairwells before and they led them down to safety.

LEGISLATOR NOWICK:

I watched them over in Town Hall in Smithtown, and what they do is incredible. Their trainers are to be commended. The dogs are to be commended, and their owners are also. They depend on one another. It is a beautiful thing.

MS. WILSON:

It is. Thank you. James, who works for Paul Tonna, used to work at the Guide Dog Foundation in Smithtown, and he is a certified dog trainer. There you are. They just are phenomenal. They are actually intelligent enough to disobey their handlers. If they realize something that the handler doesn't, they will say nope, I am not doing it.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. WILSON:

Thank you.

MS. WILSON:

Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Your welcome. Is there anybody else who would like to address the committee? I see Holly Rhodes in the audience. Do you have anything you want to talk to us about, Holly?

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

Just about the resolution if you need information.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Come on forward. I'm sorry, Holly. We have a lot of private discussions going on here this morning.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

That's all right. I just wanted to ask that you approve the resolution accepting the money for the caregivers support program. It is a new program under the Older Americans Act. It started last year, at the end of last year. We received funding last year. We put money into the budget but then we also received carry over money, so this is what this resolution is for, is to bring in the money that was not put into the County budget last year. There is a match required. The match we are getting from other programs that we do and from money from one of our outside contractors. So, we do not need to use additional County funding at this point for the match, so it will not cost the County any additional money to accept this program.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

We like that. We like to get money, we don't like to spend money.

MS. RHODES-TEAGUE:

So, I will just ask you for your support of doing that.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Thank you, Holly. Is there anybody else who would like to address the Veterans and Seniors Committee? Yes, sir.

MR. LYNCH:

Good morning. My name is John Lynch. I am acting CEO of Suffolk County United Veterans. We have a proposal to have some homes transferred over to us from the County to I suppose the town and so on. So I had an opportunity to come down and answer any questions you have with reference to that and try to insure that that happens.

What we do, I don't know if you know our background, but we do transitional housing. Well, we start with shelter housing, transitional housing, permanent housing, home ownership and senior housing for veterans. Our mission statement pretty much tells the story. We take veterans from homelessness to home ownership.

The transitional housing piece is the one that I am here to talk about today. That is the housing that rent from the County and we have been doing that since '89. It creates serious problems when the housing goes on auction. At that point we have to find a place for our residents to move to and I am just hopeful that we could get these three homes that we are talking about here. We are actually using them at the moment to house our veterans on level three-four. We have five levels of housing. I can explain most of that in detail since I have been there since the beginning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

John, just so, and the committee will take up the 72-h 1296, in a few minutes. From my understanding, what we are waiting for is a resolution from the town board in order to execute the 72-h. We own this property now, I guess, through tax liens or whatever, and we would turn it over to the town through what is called a 72-h and then they would proceed to – with this purpose of making it transitional veterans housing. But in order to do that, the process is we need a resolution from the town board which my understanding is we haven't received yet. As soon as we receive that, I don't think we have a problem with it. I mean, I don't want to be presumptuous to speak for my other Legislators, but that is where it is right at the moment. Yes, Legislator Alden.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Is the intent to the town is going to transfer them to you, or is the town going to actually keep the ownership and then work out some kind of a contract basis with you?

MR. LYNCH:

No. We are presently renting it from the County, so the idea is to have it transferred to the organization so the organization actually owns the housing. And I am not too familiar with the process here.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

John, the process is we can, I guess, gift property, and correct me, Budget Review, if I am wrong, to another taxing agency, a town, a school district, something like that. That is why it has to go back through the town. Am I right on that, fellas?

MR. CLANCY:

I do believe so, but I am not totally positive on that. I do note that in regards to the rental for these properties there was a total of \$24,000 in back rent still owned on these properties, and only one of them was appraised. So, we are not positive about the values until that happens, of the parcels to be transferred.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Okay. Talking to the County Executive's Office, though, I know the immediate thing that is holding it up is the resolution from the town. Thank you very much.

MR. LYNCH:

Thank you. Have a nice day.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

Does anybody else want to speak before Veterans and Seniors? Okay, we will go to the agenda.

RESOLUTIONS

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1243-02 Amending the 2002 Capital Program and Budget and appropriating funds for the purpose of construction of a War Dog Memorial at the H. Lee Dennison Building.

I am going to make a motion that we table this pending the Planning Committee's approval for the Armed Forces Plaza.

LEGISLATOR CRECCA:

Second.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

All in favor? Passed. **(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Legislator Haley – Not Present)**

1296-02 Authorizing conveyance of parcel to Suffolk County United Veterans, Town of Brookhaven (Section 72-h, General Municipal Law).

It is a 72-h process which we just discussed. Again, I will make a motion that it be tabled pending the resolution from the town.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

All in favor? **(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Haley)**

1465-02 Accepting and appropriating 75% reimbursable carryover funds for the Title II-E New York Elder Caregiver Support Program.

I will make a motion to approve.

LEGISLATOR ALDEN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:

All in favor? **(Vote: 4/0/0/1 Not Present: Legislator Haley)**

Without any other business before the committee, I make a motion we adjourn.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.)